

Hello, and thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony this evening.

My name is Pamela Elkow. I'm a member of the Board of Directors of the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County. I live in Redding, work in Stamford, and am a life-long resident of Connecticut. I became involved with the Cultural Alliance because I wanted to support arts and culture in Connecticut. I came to understand that one of the best ways to do that is to support institutions like the Cultural Alliance that in turn support the cultural organizations, individual artists and creative businesses. The Cultural Alliance provides leadership and coordination of advocacy efforts to help these entities survive and thrive. It supports cultural organizations and artists with industry expertise, collaborative marketing and professional mentoring to make the sector more effective and efficient. This is an effort that we should be promoting in these challenged economic times.

Any place is defined in part by the arts and culture found there. Connecticut is a place people come to or return to, like I did, because it's a place we want to live, to work and to raise our families. But we need more people to come or come back to Connecticut. Our greatest resource in Connecticut is our smart and creative people. We need more of them. A smart and creative workforce is drawn to vibrant communities with rich cultural offerings and evidence of other creative people. For employers to attract top-notch creative employees they must be able to promote their communities as exciting places to live. We are those places, but we need to be louder about it. We need to promote the arts, actively. We need to support the institutions, like the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County, that support the cultural organizations and market the region to let people know all we have to offer. New York City and Boston don't need to help promoting their creative credentials. Our diverse and diffuse municipalities and myriad cultural organizations need assistance in promoting themselves and to help Fairfield County and Connecticut compete for the talent and the businesses that are looking for that creative home.

When I was a teenager, growing up in northern Fairfield County, my friends and I would complain on a regular basis that there was "nothing to do around here". Whether that was true or not at the time, it is definitely not true now. There is lots to do. And that makes Connecticut a place that people should want to be – to live and to work. To keep it that way, we need to support the institutions that support the arts, the cultural organizations, and the artists. To do that, we need to restore funding for the arts.

Thank you,

Pamela Elkow  
Redding, CT